



## Watch for Charity Scams in Aftermath of Boston Bombing

**Release Date:** April 17, 2013

**Contact:** Jerad Albracht, 608-224-5007

**Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020**

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is urging consumers to use caution before sending money to a charity claiming to help those affected in the Boston bombing.

“Scammers follow the news, and they will do anything to take advantage of our charitable nature,” said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “Be especially on guard against social network messages, e-mails or texts that claim to have exclusive information or photos. Clicking on links or attachments can expose your computer or phone to malicious software.”

If you plan to give money to a particular charity, look it up by name at [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org) or [www.give.org](http://www.give.org). Avoid ‘charities’ that popped up since the bombing and be leery of any high-pressure pitch you receive for donations.

Under Wisconsin state law, most organizations soliciting for charitable donations must register and file an annual report with the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). To check if a charity is registered, call 1-608-266-2112 (press 1 in the initial menu) or visit the DSPS website at: <http://online.drl.wi.gov/LicenseLookup/OrganizationCredentialSearch.aspx> (choose “Charitable Organization” in the “Profession” drop-down box and enter the charity’s name in the “Firm Name” box).

In addition to researching charities, consider the following tips to further protect yourself from scammers:

- Avoid donating cash. Pay by debit or credit card or write a check directly to the charity.
- Charity scams are not exclusively online – mailings and telephone calls can also be sources of this fraud.
- With online donations, watch out for websites with "copy-cat" names. Sham organizations like to use these names to cash in on the reputations of older, more established charities. Keep in mind that most legitimate charity websites end in ".org" rather than ".com."

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wisconsin.gov>, send an e-mail to [datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov](mailto:datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov) or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

Connect with us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/wiconsumer](http://www.facebook.com/wiconsumer).

###